

SPEECH BY SHRI RAJEEV CHANDRASEKHAR, MP
DURING THE DISCUSSION ON PRIVATE MEMBERS BILL
IN RAJYA SABHA ON 10TH MARCH 2017
“THE DECLARATION OF COUNTRIES AS SPONSOR OF TERRORISM BILL, 2016”

Thank you, Sir,

Let me start by thanking all my colleagues who participated in this debate and I am grateful to them for their support through the course of the passage of this Private Bill for the last many months.

Sir, let me just start by saying, I think the objective of this bill and as I said it very early on was to start a debate in this house because since 1994 this house has said very little about Pakistan's role in sponsoring terrorism and Pakistan's role in the claiming of thousands and countless of innocent lives in India.

Sir, I would like to just put in front of my friends, I would like to place four quotes, one is what Sushma ji said in the 71st United Nations General Assembly in September 2016 and I quote “We must acknowledge that terrorism is undoubtedly the biggest violation of human rights. It targets the innocents and kills indiscriminately. Terrorism has gone way beyond affecting individuals or nation. It is a crime against humanity itself and it is important to ask, who's behind this and who benefits from this? Terrorists do not own banks or weapon factories, so let us ask the real question: who finances these terrorists, who arms them and provide sanctuaries?”

I am putting this quote out there for us to just ponder, because this is the thought that is also crossing, these are the questions that are being put by every man and woman in this country as they hear about terror acts regularly.

Sir, let me just put another quote to you, this is the former Prime Minister Indira Gandhi talking about the context in which India has never been the aggressor and she said in 1971 and I quote “India always tries to be on the side of peace and negotiations and so on, but of course we can't endanger our security in anyway. We have never ever attacked anybody but we have been attacked many times.”

Sir, in February 2000 the then Prime Minister Atal Bihari Vajpayee ji did not mince words when he said and I quote again “Pakistan is sponsoring cross border terrorism as it has its internal compulsions. Pakistan has been smarting ever since its defeat in 1971 and the formation of Bangladesh, and now it has been humiliated in Kargil. Though the battle of Kargil is over, the war against terrorism will continue till Pakistan does not stop sponsoring terrorism. There can be no meaningful talks with Pakistan till it stops cross-border terrorism.”

Sir, the point here is for seven decades our neighbor has managed to leverage the sponsorship of terror as an instrument of statecraft. This is the fact, this has been going on for 70 years and I think like my colleague Maheshji said it is now time for us as a nation and the people and as Parliament to say enough is enough.

I think some of our members who were talking about various points including the fact, there was a question raised about whether there is any utility of this bill. Sir there is a utility of this bill and the utility is very simple, since 1994 the Parliament has not spoken about this issue and I think for the Parliament to speak about the fact that Pakistan is a state sponsor of terrorism is in itself a big thing.

It may not translate into the necessary executive actions immediately on passing of the bill or on the discussion of the bill but the fact is that the Parliament of India and indeed the Rajya Sabha has not spoken of this issue since 1994. So just by speaking sir, we are sending a message.

I don't want to go on to extraordinary lengths to reinforce and reemphasize the need for such a debate, need for such a bill, but I want to clearly address some of the doubts that have been raised by the members because these are doubts that exist today even among some pockets in India.

So if you give me some time Sir, I would like to say this, one of the points that for example K.T. Tulsi ji has said is that the executive has power so why should the Parliament do anything about it but that is precisely why this bill is necessary, that is precisely why this debate is necessary because over the last seven decades successive executives have abrogated their responsibility in declaring and calling out Pakistan for being a state sponsor of terrorism. So if the executive does not want to do it, the Parliament can't just sit around and say we will just stand by, sit silently and have the executive decide what the people of India want.

So sir, there is a utility and this Parliament has a role to talk about Pakistan's role in terrorism regardless of what the executive does or does not do. So that argument that the executive has the power and so the Parliament should sit on its seats and do nothing, I think is a moot point.

There is another point raised again by a colleague saying 'we need action, we do not need bills', but that is precisely what this bill is supposed to not allow the discourse to drift into. Today when there is Terror Act, we are left with two options, one is you take a candle and do a candlelight vigilance and say 'Aman ki Asha' or we say surgical strike or a military action. The whole contention of this bill is to argue that we have a broad space between doing nothing and doing military options and that is precisely what this bill is about. This bill is about exploring the middle ground of options that have to do with economy, trade and other forms of sanction and other forms of pressure on Pakistan that go beyond doing nothing and doing only military action.

Sir there is another point raised about we must also declare Cuba and Israel, the point is we can as a Parliament only talk about who impacts us, who harms us. Cuba and Israel don't harm us, if some other country is affected by Cuba, some other people are affected by Israel, they will in their Parliament, in their legislature declare them a terrorist state. This is India, we represent the people of India and the clear and present danger to the people of India is Pakistan so therefore the argument that we should drag in Cuba and Israel is moot.

Another point that was raised was that we should work with other countries, now this is again a bit farcical because if we are the victims of terrorism, we have to take the first move on this issue rather than rely on other countries to work with us to declare our enemy a terrorist state.

My colleague Manu Singhvi ji said this thing about graded response and their I agree with my friend Subramaniam Swamy, I think the time for graded response is over, there is no need for us to investigate whether Pakistan is a terror state, we already know that it is a terror state and now it's the question of debating options.

Sir I will just end by also again repeating what my colleague Dr. Swamy said, just yesterday the US Congressman Ted Poe, the Chairman of the House Subcommittee on Terrorism has introduced H.R. 1449, the Pakistan State Sponsor of Terrorism Act 2017 and he quotes during the introduction and I quote "Not only is Pakistan an untrustworthy ally, Islamabad has also aided and abetted enemies of the United States for years. From harboring Osama bin Laden to its cozy relationship with the Haqqani network, there is more than enough evidence to determine whose side Pakistan is on in the War on Terror. And it's not America's, it is not the World's. It is time we stop paying Pakistan for its betrayal and designate it for what it is: a State Sponsor of Terrorism."

Sir, I'll end by requesting the government that the status quo not continue, that the government explore options that go beyond just candle raising or military option and explore a whole plethora of option that lie in the economic and the trade area, so that we can approach the issue of Pakistan and the relationship with Pakistan afresh.

Thank you Sir

Jai Hind